

THE FLATIRON AND THE RED CLOAK



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"THE PASSENGERS SMILED AT SIGHT OF THAT GIGGLING,
FROLICKING CROWD." Page 47.

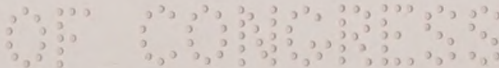
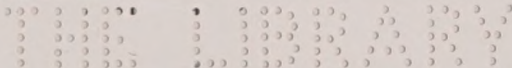
A decorative border of grapevines with leaves and clusters of grapes surrounds the central text. The border is composed of two main stems that cross in the center, with smaller branches extending to the corners.

THE
FLATIRON
AND THE
RED CLOAK

BY
ABBY MORTON DIAZ



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Publishers.



THE FLATIRON AND THE RED CLOAK

OLD TIMES AT X-ROADS

BY

MRS. ABBY MORTON DIAZ

AUTHOR OF "THE WILLIAM HENRY LETTERS," "LUCY MARIA,"
"DOMESTIC PROBLEMS," "BYBURY TO BEACON STREET,"
"ONLY A FLOCK OF WOMEN"



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1891

TO
MY GRAND-NIECE MARGARET

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The Flatiron and the Red Cloak.

OH, the times of the long time ago
Were not like the times we have now !
And new children may like to hear how
The old-fashioned children played plays,
And some of their doings and ways ;
Of their smiles and their tears, their hopes
and their fears,
In the good old grandmotherly days,
The days of the long-time ago.

YES, the plays and ways were different ; but if you should happen to be in a certain village on the New England coast, you would see some of the same old houses, and just at the outskirts the same little brook slipping through the grass, and the stepping-stones for stepping across, and a place sunk in the ground on " T'other-side " where once stood an old hut, the home of " Little Lyddy " and her Granny. The two boards laid across for her dog-cart to go over on have been gone this many a day.

I.

JANET, LUCETTA, AND EMILY.

ONE summer morning, very early, before even the sun was up, Lucetta Holmes — “ nine years and fast going on ten,” as her mother told when asked — stepped briskly along the roadside, basket in hand, and at last stood still, facing a small cottage, seemingly watching for some one to come out.

As no one came, she walked softly up to a low window opening into a bedroom, and whispered loud as she could, “ Janet! Janet Jackson! Going?”

The curtain was quickly pulled aside from the opening, and in its place came a round pink-cheeked face — Janet’s.

“ Yes, ma said I might if I would come back time enough to set the table. Don’t make any noise; I’ll be out soon as I’ve tied on my pantallettes. My basket’s under the bed; here it goes out the window! And — here — come — *I!*”

“ Now we’ll skip!” said Lucetta. And they skipped lightly up the walk and through the gateway.

A lovely June morning. The sun was send-

ing his rosy light first upon the hilltops, then lower and lower, till at last the whole landscape was aglow. The birds sang in the apple orchards; the flowers were abloom, clover, buttercups, daisies; the mowers were mowing the grass fields — you could hear the “*chic! chic! chic!*” as they sharpened their scythes. Bare-foot boys in broad-brimmed, damaged straw hats were driving their cows to pasture — here and there a bossy-calf bobbing alongside its ma; the insects were buzzing and humming, and the new day was started right merrily on its way.

And hand in hand right merrily the two girls tripped along, skipped along, tiptoeing lightly over the dewy grass as it came in their path, sunbonnets now and then blown back by the fresh morning breeze, gaily swinging their baskets — quite large baskets, much too roomy for berries, even had it been berry-time.

On and on they went their ways. And such ways! Around the far backsides of houses — down in hollows where things had been thrown away, gathering up, as they went their curious ways, all kinds of things found in all kinds of places, covering them all carefully with handfuls of grass and flowers; and what was to be done with their “findings” not a child who reads this story could guess — nor even a grown-up person.

On their way home they overtook Emily Alden. She had been out in the fields to wash

her face in June dew, said to be good for the skin.

“Oh, Emily!” cried Janet. “We’ve been after ‘findin’s;’ and we’ve got ever so many things, and there are more places to hunt in!”

“Why, girls!” exclaimed Emily, seeing the shapes of things in Janet’s basket and a teapot nose out in plain sight. “Are you two going to have a Mammy Doty?”

“Not really to *have* one,” said Lucetta. “We are going to make one for Janet’s sister Toosey — make it way down by the stone wall in the corner of their orchard — make it private, you know, and so we’ve covered ’em over.”

“And keep it private for a Secret Surprise till her birthday,” said Janet. “She’ll be six then.”

“And her ma is going to begin on that very day,” said Lucetta, “to call Toosey by her right name — Jerusha — if she can, because she was named so for her great-grandmother — I mean for Toosey’s ma’s great-grandmother who was good to Toosey’s ma when she was alive — I mean when Toosey’s ma’s great-grandmother was alive.”

“And what have you found?” asked Emily, peeping in.

“Let’s sit down on the white rock,” said Janet. “Now you hide your eyes, Emily, and don’t peek, and we’ll spread the things out.”

So Emily put both hands up to her face, but talked through between them, saying that white

rock was 'bout the size of the one they used to call "salt pork," over at Bridgton, and all the children used to stop going home from school, and salt it with sand. "Just as the little ones are doing now, here," said Janet, as she and Lucetta placed the "findin's" on the rather hubbly white surface.

"Mayn't I just peek?" asked Emily at last.

"You may *look!*" answered both the others. "Unhide your eyes!"

"Why, girls!" exclaimed Emily, as she unhid her eyes and let them behold the strange array. "Where *did* you find this? Almost a whole glass tumbler! and gilt around the edge of it!"

"And here's a prettier one still!" said Janet.

"A good deal prettier," said Lucetta. "See! — Little gilt dots all over it! We found that way down behind Mary Jane's house, in that old scraggly place. Mary Jane's mother felt dreadfully when 'twas hit and two little pieces dropped out its side. She cried some. She wouldn't set it back on the shelf. Her uncle brought two of 'em home from sea. She had one and her cousin had one. She said she wanted it out of her sight forever after — I mean forever after 'twas broke."

"That's quite a good coffee-pot — nothing but its nose melted part off," said Emily, taking up things one by one. "And this little iron skillet looks 'bout as good as a good one — 'twill

do for Toosey to make b'lieve warm her porridge in; one of its little teenty legs is broke off, but she can shove a stone underneath and play 'tis a coal o' fire. And if here isn't a pint tin-pail cover that will fit it almost well enough! And this china cracked teapot will do first-rate. You haven't found many plates and cups yet; but that's a good blue-edged platter, the part that's left."

"And see this!" said Janet, taking something out from under her apron. "Do look at this!"

"Oh! oh! oh! oh!" cried Emily. "*What* a big piece of looking-glass! I never had such a big piece of looking-glass in a single one of my Mammy Doty's!" And Emily went on to show how a strip of something could be put round the edge, for a frame, so that it would seem like a true looking-glass.

"And what do you say to *this?*" asked Lucetta, suddenly bringing something around from behind her back.

"Well, now!" cried Emily. "A copper tea-kettle, sure's I live and breathe! And we can put a stick across for a make-b'lieve crane, and — and beg some hooks to hook on to the crane. I'll tease my ma for one, and you can both of you tease your ma's."

"And maybe we'll find a little joby-kettle somewhere, and we'll hang that and the tea-kettle on the hooks," said Janet.

"And put some sticks of wood under, for a

make-b'lieve fire," said Emily. "You'll let me be in the secret, won't you?"

"Of course. It'll be more fun, all three together," said Lucetta.

"I almost want to make it for ourselves," said Janet, looking at the "findings" fondly.

"And I," said Lucetta.

"Too bad we've grown up so old!" laughed Emily. "I'm ten. Only think! Ten years old! I don't care; ma says I may play rag-babies long's I want to, if 'tis till twenty."

"And when Toosey has her Mammy Doty parties, I'll fetch all mine," said Lucetta. "I mean all my rag-babies."

"And if 'tis a real truly Grand Party," said Emily, "with real frosted cake, and wineglasses to have our sweetened water in—you've got two here, and maybe we'll find some more—I'll let my great London Doll come. Truly, now, if I am so old, I'd like to play Mammy Doty! Big girls don't have half so much fun as the little ones—hardly a thing to play with!"

Janet told Emily of a cherry-tree that had grown up by the stone-wall corner down in their orchard, in just the right place to make a good shade for the Mammy Doty. "And we can have a big front-yard," said she, "by putting stones around. And we can make a big front-room in the same way. And some day Toosey can have a Truly Party, and invite all her little girls, and we big ones can be their aunts and their mothers come to see to them."

“Yes! And dress up!” cried Emily. “Like grown-ups! And act out grown-ups! I wish”—

But before her wish was told, Emily was knocked nearly over by a frowsy, towsly, light-colored, partly-gray small dog that came bounding over the ground, wagging his tail about forty wags to a minute, and then went sniffing and frisking among the things still left upon the rock. He knocked over the coffee-pot and tea-kettle, jumped plump against Janet, and probably would have smashed some of the prettiest things had not Lucetta already gathered them into her apron, to pack away in the basket.

“Oh, you scamp of a Caper!” cried out Janet. But scamp Caper was speeding afar by the way he came.

“Gone back to find Lyddy,” said Emily. “He always runs back when he gets ahead.”

“There she goes with her bundle,” said Lucetta, speaking softly.

“Should we have to invite *her* to any of Toosey’s parties?” whispered Janet.

“My ma,” said Lucetta in a very low tone of voice, “says Lyddy is not a proper child for me to go with. But pa says she is as good as anybody’s child, if she does have to carry the clothes home for Granny, and does live over T’other-side. Folks say,” went on Lucetta, whispering, for Lyddy was passing quite near, “that Granny goes to see the old squaws that

live back in the woods, and lets 'em come in sometimes. I mean when they're going by."

"Do see Lyddy's pantalettes!" whispered Emily. "What *are* they made of? One of 'em's coming off!"

"Well, mine plague me that same way," said Janet. "I have to keep tying 'em tighter all the time. But I must hurry home. Next time let's go hunting along other places — as private as we can."

"You mustn't let Toosey see anything," said Lucetta.

"Let's hide everything in my cellar," said Emily, throwing more grass and flowers over the basket. "*Private's* the word."

"*Private's* the word," said Lucetta.

"*Private's* the word," said Janet.

II.

“NO, I THANK YOU!”

It is not often a Present is received with such reply — and by a young gentleman! And it was a good Present. But there was cause; and as to the reply, although not spoken in the English language it was well understood.

The presentation of the Present took place in the small village we have been telling about, one night just after sunset.

The village probably got its name — “X-Roads” — before many houses were built there. It had several lanes but only one street. This one street was the stage-road from Boston. It came a long way, and went directly through and a long way beyond. The road from Hilton came over the Hill, and crossed the stage-road on a slant so as to make an X.

Hilton was nearly half a mile distant. It had two wharves, and a ship-yard, and the town-house, and the meeting-house, and two school-houses. Whenever any of the X-Roads people went to Hilton, they called it going Over the Hill, except on Sundays, and then they called it going to Meeting.

Lyddy, Granny's child, was about two years old when she and Granny came to live at X-Roads. The town let them have an old hut standing on town's land — over T'other-side; and Granny herself did most of the fixing up, such as setting glass, and shingling over the bare spots. She earned their living by washing and other work — braided rugs, and did some spinning at home and around in houses. The most of her employers lived Over the Hill.

T'other-side was not far away. It was just across the brook, where the town's land began. Next came pastures, and then woods where a few colored folks lived, some of them part Indian. They often went through X-Roads and Over the Hill with their baskets and brooms to sell; all good honest people.

Granny's hut had but one room, with a corner boarded off for a bed; and there was a big fireplace, its chimney all in sight, going up through the loft overhead. The hearth came out far into the room and was warm to the feet in winter time.

The "Present" just spoken of was presented just after sunset of the day when Lucetta Holmes and Janet Jackson went to hunt for "findings," and sat upon the rock, and talked with Emily Alden in low voices about Lyddy as she passed along, while her dog, Caper, stopped to frisk among the Mammy Doty things.

While Lyddy was a little child she had scarcely noticed that the other children did not

make her their playmate. Now that she was nine she felt it. She had felt it that morning. On the sunset night we are speaking of she said to Granny, "Granny, the girls don't talk to me — they talk *about* me."

Granny made no answer, but began to bite her nails. They two and Caper were sitting together in the doorway.

"Granny, what are my pantalettes made of?" Lyddy asked.

"Made of good cloth that I wove myself, and colored with good otter-colored dye that I made myself. What do you ask that for?"

"'Cause Emily Alden talked about 'em to the girls this morning."

Granny put up her other hand, and began biting all her nails tremendously; and scarcely smiled when Lyddy told, with now and then a giggle, how Caper came running and tumbled their things about.

The sunset was as fine as had been the sunrise in the morning. Great pillowy clouds, purple, golden, lilac, silver-tinted, were massed in the west; and, indeed, the whole sky was one grand display of color.

But Granny's thoughts were not on the beautiful sky; nor were Caper's. Caper had been curled up on the broad flat doorstep-stone, close as he could get to Lyddy's feet; and now while his part of the story was being told he showed great interest, his eyes shining, his tail wagging as if it would wag itself off. He

sprang to his feet; and now and then he would give a quick, snapping little bark, as if he were doing his deeds all over again. And then he would look fondly at Lyddy, and curl down again close by her feet.

Caper was fond of Lyddy, and indeed he had good reason to be, for when he was only a poor lost little puppy-dog she befriended him. Yes, a poor, lost, hurt little doggie was Caper once. Nobody knew where he came from, but it was supposed he might have been lost from the stage as it passed through the woods.

It was one day in the month of November that Lyddy found him. She was out picking box-berries — sometimes called checker-berries — for Granny to sell Over the Hill and while picking she heard a strange noise — a mournful kind of noise. She was scared. It made her think of wild creatures and "Old Stragglers," and she began to climb over a stone wall to run. In looking about her in fright, when on the wall, she saw something white and not very large, quite a way off among the bushes. It was trying to move.

Lyddy thought at once that that was what had made the noise, and wasn't afraid any more. She got down, and went softly to it on tiptoe, and found it to be a little puppy-dog, gray and white. It hurt him to move his leg, and at first she thought it was broken; but it was only badly bruised — perhaps by a wheel or a horse's hoof. He cried when she touched him;

but after a while he let her roll him into the skirt of her gown, and in that way she carried him home.

When there she placed him in a corner on a pile of Granny's wool. Then she climbed up in a chair and reached the salve box on the mantle-piece, and very tenderly did she lay on the salve with her soft, little-girl fingers. Then she gave him some scraps left from dinner, and he made out to lick them from the floor.

Lyddy took the whole charge of the little dog and his hurt leg, except that Granny named him. She said he must be named for a dog she had known, and the name must be "Caper."

As Caper became well and able to race about, he could scarcely let Lyddy out of his sight. He cried every time she went to school, and whined in his naps, and always met her at the brook when she was coming home; and when she was fairly in the house he would jump all over her. At night his bed was made up close by her side, and in the morning he was up top, all ready for a frolic.

A nice dog Caper had grown to be, nimble, frisky, playful. He was white and gray, and had a wholly black tail. In size he was like Billy Winkle's Pig in the story-book, "Not very little and not very big."

As Lyddy ended her story about the Mammy Doty things, and his rogueries, Caper settled down and went to sleep.

“It is very pretty up there, Granny,” Lydia said, her face upturned to the sky.

Granny’s thoughts were not upon the sky, however, but on something much duller — on the spelling-book. She had heard what Lyddy had said about the girls’ talk, and then had turned her thoughts upon Lyddy’s spelling-book. She always studied Lyddy’s daily spelling-lessons at night. Lyddy had first to pronounce all the words for her; for she could not read very well, except in the Bible, where she knew the verses by heart. Even the common words in the spelling-book puzzled her, especially *c, i, o, u, s; t, i, o, u, s; s, c, i, o, u, s*. Also, *d, i, e, r*, in “soldier,” when to her belief just a *j* would do the business.

Yet she was resolved that Lyddy should know not only spelling, but as much as any girl, even to working muslin and lace. As to why she wished Lyddy to learn so many things, that cannot be told now, for it is another part of the story; and besides, the Present spoken of is on its way to the gentleman — you have already been introduced to him; his name is Mr. Caper.

Yes, the Present is about to arrive on four wheels, small ones, but real ones, and made to go. And made to come.

“What is that rattling so?” Granny wants to know. It is the Present. It comes rattling over the boards across the brook, then along the pathway through the bushes. Caper rouses,

pricks up his ears, stands stock-still, listening. Granny and Lyddy rise from the doorstep.

Now it is in sight. A roller-cart; just big enough for Caper to pull with a bundle in it — say a bundle of clean clothes to be taken home. It has been made by Mr. Calvin Alden, the father of Emily Alden, a carpenter; and it is being brought by Emily's eleven-years-old brother, Aleck, who intends to present it with a speech composed by Aunt Nancy, his mother's sister, who lives in the family, and is always up to fun when there is any.

Aleck comes up the path to the door, pauses on the door-stone, takes off his hat, looks Caper straight in the eyes, and speaks:

“Mr. Caper; this fine cart with this fine rope harness is presented to you as a reward of merit, also that you may have more merit; the merit — the merit, Mr. Caper, of drawing the bundles now lugged and tugged by your mistress Lyddy. I will now begin to instruct you.”

During this address Caper has kept turning his head this way and that, as dogs do when looked straight in the face.

And now comes a lively scramble; for Master Aleck, the chief part of the occasion! As the harness is about to be applied, Caper slips from under with a bound. Aleck seizes him, and with Caper held between his knees, tries again, tries so hard that Caper squeals. There he goes! Next, the same thing over again.

“Maybe you’d do it better inside,” says Granny.

So Aleck takes the cart inside the hut, followed by Granny and Lyddy — Caper following Lyddy, yet cautiously.

Now the door is closed and the harness is once more laid on, Lyddy holding Caper quiet. The harness is attached to the cart — and now come the “No, I thank you’s,” quick and sharp, and away goes Caper around the room; the cart rattling behind, and the two together knocking over chairs, brooms, tongs and shovel, and a little round table with everything on board — cups, candlestick, spectacles, spelling-book, knitting-work; Lyddy, Aleck, and Granny too, darting this way and that, trying to catch him and lead him.

He tangles the cart up in the spinning-wheel, and then in the folds of the long red broadcloth cloak that hangs from a wooden peg. Granny springs quick to save the cloak.

But as he is now really harnessed in fast, Aleck darts and opens the door, and out goes Caper with a jump and many a twitch, Aleck and Lyddy holding on to the cart and the reins too, to keep him from galloping.

Outside, Caper grows more quiet; though his “*No, I thank you’s!*” are not entirely over for some time. But he finally comes and stands by Lyddy, cart, harness, and all.

Quite a company have collected, chiefly of boys and girls, a few grown-ups standing apart,

Aunt Nancy among them. Can you not make a picture — a mind-picture — of the whole scene? First the hut, with Granny in the doorway; the cleared grass-spot, the trees and bushes circling around the whole, Caper in harness, with some little boys stroking him. In this mind-picture, the women must wear on their heads either just a kerchief thrown over, or else the high calashes, made somewhat like the top of a buggy, in order to give room for the high-combs and caps and turbans then worn — all married women wore either caps or turbans.

You must picture Granny as wearing a small turban made of some dark stuff, and with two curls, partly gray, on each side of her forehead, rolled up, and pinned flat with a pin. Picture her, too, in a petticoat and short-gown; not a short gown, but a short-gown, reaching nearly to the knees, and tied around the waist with her apron-strings. Think of her as a small woman, not tall, a little bent, and having rather a thin face.

And all the boys in your picture, big or little, must have round jackets and long trousers. Yes, *long*, for in those olden times knee-pants were unknown.

In the back-ground, under a clump of lilacs, must stand three girls — Janet Jackson, Emily Alden, and Lucetta Holmes. They are whispering together, not about Lyddy, but still about Toosey's birthday. It is to come on Saturday, the next day but one; and there must be a get-

ting-up early in the morning, long before she is awake. Everything has been kept private except from Aunt Nancy. She is thought to be as good as a girl. You must picture Aunt Nancy as as a slender woman, about thirty. For a bonnet she wears a calash of the kind just mentioned. Queer enough they would look now! They were stiffened and made to arch up by having rattans run in. The material was usually green silk. A narrow ruffle of the same adorned the front and a wide one made the frill behind. The calash usually had a ribbon bridle which, held by the hand, prevented it from falling back or blowing away.

III.

“PRIVATE FROM TOOSEY.”

“HERE’S the string, Emily; you tie my pug, and I’ll tie yours. Tie it tight now!”

It was early in the morning of little Toosey Jackson’s birthday. The Mammy Doty “findings” were to be carried out to the Jackson’s Orchard Corner before Toosey Jackson waked up. Afterwards, of course, she would have to be watched, and kept from going that way. And as the birthday came on Saturday, when school kept only in the forenoon, it was thought best, in order to guard against accidental findings-out, to wait till afternoon before putting the Mammy Doty together and presenting it.

To make the day still more of a surprise for Toosey, it had been decided that all the “little ones,” as her playmates were called, were to be invited to come and bring all their ragbabies; and this had called for still more plannings and an extra early rising.

Therefore Lucetta Holmes had stayed all night at Emily Alden’s, and Emily’s Aunt Nancy had agreed to call them, oh, very, very early — earlier than it ever was in the world, even be-

fore putting on all her clothes; and she had had to hurry down to them with only a bed-spread over her shoulders.

They tied each other's pugs as tight as they could, and as high up as they could; and if you wish to know what kind of pugs, think of the brush part of your paint-brush, tied tight, and then, if long enough, turned back and the end tied down flat.

The two girls started out carrying each a basketful of the nicest of the "findings." The big things were left down cellar in a far corner, all well covered with hay. After school at noon Emily and Lucetta were to scamper down with them to the Jackson orchard on the sly.

The sun had not yet peeped above the horizon; and about the only person they met was Janet's and Toosey's grown-up sister, Phœbe Jackson. She had been weaving cotton cloth in the loom in the big kitchen, and had come to spread it out to whiten on the dewy grass.

Phœbe told the girls that Janet was about ready. "I left her tugging away at her pantallettes," said Phœbe, laughing. "She never will learn how to tie a good strong double-bow-knot, and they keep coming down. If you peek in the window, *make signs*; for talking loud would wake up Toosey. Toosey sleeps in the trundle-bed now. There isn't room to draw it far out; but you can see her head well enough, with its little ruffled nightcap on, cunning as can be! Don't speak. Make signs.

And signs they made of all kinds ; and Janet, one foot in a chair, struggling with her single-bow-knots and pantalettes, made all kind of signs back, and all kinds of motions with fingers and lips, meaning, *Hush! I'm coming! Sh! Don't wake her up! Now! Go round to cellar-door!*

Janet brought up two baskets of things from her cellar, the "ornaments" on top, well covered with hay ; and when all had been carried down to the Mammy Doty Corner, the girls threw more hay upon the whole.

Then they talked over the plans for the day a little more. In the afternoon, at the proper time, the "little ones" must bring their ragbabies down to the Orchard Corner, and have it wholly unknown to Toosey. After the "surprise," they were to play "Mammy Doty" with Toosey ; and the ragbabies big enough to "come to the table," were to be seated around the table, in the big front-room of the Mammy Doty house, and have make-b'lieve sweetened water and make-b'lieve other things passed round to them. The smaller ragbabies would be put to bed in the Mammy Doty bedroom, taking turns, of course, on account of the small accommodations.

They decided that they would see the "little ones," on their way to school, and privately tell them to bring their ragbabies to the Orchard Corner at two o'clock, and then stay somewhere around in the pastures near by, listening for two toots of the horn.

Then the girls went to their homes, and ate breakfast.

All the “little ones” were seen on their way to school and privately invited. The Secret Surprise was explained to them until they fully understood it; and they were told to try hard to keep it private from Toosey, and from everybody, lest somebody should tell somebody, and Toosey get word of it. And try hard they did. For all the forenoon they kept nudging each other, and making believe clap hands, and covering their lips with their fingers, and pointing privately at Toosey, and holding up *two* fingers to mean two o'clock. At recess they were kept under guard by Janet, Emily, and Lucetta. On the way home they were full of antics; and when they got to the white rock by the roadside, Emily got them to “salt fat pork” a while in order to keep Toosey there; and the “fat pork” was salted as never before.

Meanwhile Janet ran home to make sure all was safe in the Orchard Corner.

While the little ones were “salting fat pork” Aunt Nancy came along, and said to Toosey, “Toosey Jackson, I have got a lot of glass beads, blue, red, green, yellow, all colors; and if you will bring your ragbabies over right away after dinner, every one of them, you can string them each a string of beads.”

So Toosey went over to Mrs. Alden's; and by quarter of two some of the “little ones,” hidden thereabout, were watching the house on every

side, and also listening for the horn to sound once. At this first toot two of them were to hurry in, and tell Toosey that somebody wished to see her over in her orchard. Then the other little ones were to come scattering down to the Orchard Corner, one at a time.

And now, ever since dinner, Janet and Emily and Lucetta had been more than busy, putting the Mammy Doty things each in its proper place. The stone-wall corner made two sides of the Mammy Doty house; and for a third side a rope was put from the wall to a tree, and a cloth hung over it. The front was entirely open.

The "house" had three rooms, separated by rows of stones. The middle one was the kitchen. On its right was the bedroom, on its left the sink-room, where the girls swiftly arranged the cooking utensils, such as fry-pans, tea-kettles, skillets, coffee-pots; also, brooms, mops, a toasting-iron — all in excellent order.

They made the bedroom bed of sheep's wool, and spread over it a not very much worn-out cradle quilt. Their fine, large piece of looking-glass, bound round with yellow by Lucetta's nimble fingers, was hung up there on a stick stuck in between the stones of the wall. The chairs and the stand were made of blocks from Mr. Alden's carpenter's shop. The chairs had some kind of pretty-colored stuff laid over them. Very small mats and rugs for the floor had been cut in different shapes, out of handsome

pieces — one was red velvet — quite unusual. The ornaments were pretty shells, some picked up along the shore Over the Hill; but the prettiest ones had been brought by vessels from across the sea. To help “pretty the room,” as the girls said, they had placed here and there a few bright bird-feathers and bits of gay ribbon; also sprigs of bears’ grass, an evergreen vine that ran wild over the pastures.

The kitchen table was the cover of a butter-firkin, with a white cloth spread over it, and supported by four tall, slender sticks, pounded into the ground so as to be almost even, and — as Aunt Nancy said privately — so tall and so slim they made the table look as if it were running off on its own legs with a white handkerchief over its shoulders! Aunt Nancy always saw all the fun there was in anything. The kitchen chairs were of various kinds — boxes, milking-stools, and a few aged truly chairs, sometime out of use; and there was one disabled cricket, propped up, where one leg was gone, by a good block of about the right length — for the girls could turn almost everything to advantage. They made the fireplace of bricks; and, as had been planned at the beginning, a stick was somehow laid across for a crane, and the small copper tea-kettle hung there by hooks begged from the three ma’s, and a plenty of kindling underneath showed why the tea-kettle was there.

The buttery was at one corner of the kitchen. For shelves, the girls had arranged there three

round sticks of wood different in size, the smallest at the top. The glassware — some of it gilt, brought from Holland — was on the top shelf. Next below was the chinaware. The bottom shelf was given up to the common ware. The knives, forks and spoons were a most interesting collection, as were also the candlesticks; and there were a few implements not in present use — such as cards for carding the wool into rolls before spinning it, and molds for running the tallow candles.

The three girls worked hurriedly, not only because there was so much to do, but for another reason; namely, a change in the afternoon plan — a change that added another surprise to the Birthday Party; and though brought about by just a Dream, it makes one thing more that must be told before Toosey is tooted for.

IV.

ALL BEFORE THE HORN BLOWS.

THIS about the Dream, and what came of it, will show its importance more and more as the story goes on. A story has to take its own course; no one can help that.

As readers will remember, the three girls had spoken at the white rock of another orchard-party for Toosey, sometime, which *they* would attend as "mothers" of the "little ones," and be dressed in grown-up clothes — a truly party with truly seats, and a truly table with truly nice things to eat.

They had spoken of it also afterwards, and by reading further you will learn how it was that this Mother Party came on the same afternoon with the Secret Surprise, and was itself a secret surprise, planned in a hurry.

It has just been told that Janet Jackson left Toosey "salting fat pork," and ran home to make sure all was safe in the Orchard Corner, and that all three, Janet, Lucetta, and Emily, went there and put the Mammy Doty in form and order.

It must now be told that in going home

from school, they saw Emily's Aunt Nancy standing at her chamber window, and beckoning to them to come up.

When entering, they gave, as they always did, an admiring glance at Aunt Nancy's bed. They thought the tall, carved post-bedstead so fine, with its white canopy overhead, edged around with wide, netted fringe! The girls had always admired this canopied bed, with its white counterpane that Aunt Nancy herself had worked in her grapes-and-grape-leaves pattern; the full feather-bed, made up so beautifully square and even, as was the way with beds in feather-bed days.

Aunt Nancy commonly wore a vandyke cape over her shoulders; her back hair, as was then the fashion, being tied pretty near the top of her head, and brought around a high-top shell comb, and her front hair done in two curls and held by a side-comb at each side. A nice face Aunt Nancy had, at times sober, but easy to laugh; with beautiful, dark eyes and level eyebrows; her hair dark, and her mouth like a picture, with its winning smile.

Aunt Nancy was a good friend to everybody; but oh, how she did love to make herself a companion for the children. Emily's set declared her "as good as a girl." For though gentlemanly she was as lively as any of them when the lively times came.

As the three girls came in that noon, at her beckoning, this dear young-hearted aunt shut

the door softly and motioned them to be seated. Then she smiled at them as she stood by the mantelpiece of the low fireplace — a fascinating old seaport shelf, with its shells of different sizes, shapes, and colors; pieces of pink coral and white; its pair of pictures of saints, and curious little gilt-and-china images, all brought from foreign parts by a lover who, years before, had sailed far away over the seas — to return no more.

The girls sat there, each partway on her stiff-backed chair — Janet taking the opportunity to tighten up her pantalettes — wondering what Aunt Nancy wanted them for. And finally Aunt Nancy said: “Girls, I want to tell you that last night I had a dream. It woke me up in the middle of the night. I dreamed that we four were over at the new Mammy Doty house, with Toosey and the little ones and their ragbabies, and that when the make-believe sweetened water was being passed round in the Mammy Doty glassware, I gave each of the little ones a Fried Boy, with cloves for eyes — just as I make them, you know. All the ragbabies were there; our Polly’s Great Gomorrah and Toosey’s corn-cob twins, and Lucy Babcock’s clothespin family, and several wishbone infants in long clothes. I dreamed that I sat down there against the stone wall, and that while you were passing the things round, some of the girls of your set, Mary Jane, and Serena, and Susan Frances, and ’Lizabeth Ann, and Elviry, and

Hannah Babcock, came racing into the orchard in grown-up clothes, rigged on in all kinds of one-sided and ridiculous ways — especially the caps and bonnets and calashes — and shouting all together, ‘Oh, ho! oh, ho! *We’ve* found you out, Toosey Jackson! *We’ve* come to your party!’

“It startled me so, that in my dream I jumped, and a stone fell down on my head. The jump waked me, and I found that the stone was in reality a book that I read in after going to bed, and laid way up high on the pillow, by the head-board. But the dream seemed very real.

“And now, girls,” continued Aunt Nancy, “what do you say? You have been planning a Mother Party for Toosey sometime — why not do it now, and give Toosey a big day? Suppose you run out and speak to Serena and others of the nearest ones, and let them skip round and tell the others. They can each one of them bring a few dress-up things, and there are a good many things in the house and Phœbe Jackson and Adeline Holmes can come and help fix, and bring their mothers’ curious old bonnets; and after you three have started the little ones playing games you can leave them, and run right across lots in here, and by that time the others will be on hand, and Phœbe and I and Adeline can slip the things on the whole of you, and start you trooping into the orchard where the Secret Surprise will be going on — and surprise the Secret Surprisers!”

The girls sprang up and made for the door. "Tell the nearest ones," repeated Aunt Nancy, "and tell them to skip quick and keep it private, and that the things must be brought here as soon as the little ones have got to the Mammy Doty Corner; and I'll go right down now into the kitchen and fry the 'boys,' and make that much come true, anyway, while you are having your dinners and putting the Mammy Doty in shape. Tell the girls there must be a pretty lively stir!"

And any person perching high up in a tree that stood high up a hill thereabouts and looking down upon the field-paths and lanes and the roadsides and "cross-lot" ways, and through roofs of "housen," as houses were often called in the olden time, would have seen a "pretty lively stir" as the different "nearest ones" got the word and passed it on, and all of them flew to closets and chests, and up into garrets, in order to help celebrate Toosey Jackson's birthday.

V.

THE SECRET SURPRISES.

THE Secret Surprise having now extended itself in various directions, we can think of it as going on, towards two o'clock that Saturday afternoon, in about this way.

Toosey Jackson, soon to be "Toosey" no more, is now up in Aunt Nancy's room, sitting in Polly Alden's little rocking-chair, looking over two small picture-books that are to be hers, only she does not know it. The glass beads are strung, and strings of them adorn her own neck, also the necks of her ragbabies.

Articles of grown-up clothing are shut up in Emily's bedroom down below under guard of Phœbe Jackson; and Aunt Nancy's closet holds a collection of the same. Serena, 'Lizabeth Ann, and others of Janet's girls, each with a bundle tied up in a homespun cotton handkerchief of very large dimensions, are beginning their various roundabout ways to the same house.

The "little ones," Toosey's mates, have handed their ragbabies over the stone wall to the three managers, and are now hiding in good

places, anxiously awaiting the first sound of the horn.

In the Orchard Corner, the managers, Lucetta, Janet, and Emily, are finishing up; namely, placing stones to make a large front room to the Mammy Doty house and also an exceedingly large front yard. As soon as all is ready Janet will toot the horn. At one toot the two "little ones," who are to tell Toosey that some one wishes to see her down in her orchard, are to start for Aunt Nancy's. At the second call — two toots — all the other "little ones" are to start up from their hiding-places around Emily's house, and follow a little way behind Toosey — but not too near.

It takes a good many words to tell all these things, but that is because they are going on in so many places it is hard for the story to keep up.

"*T-o-o-t!*" First call!

Away go the two appointed "little ones" on a tight run to Aunt Nancy's, into the house, and up-stairs. There, nearly out of breath, they manage to say, "Toosey! Somebody wants — to see you — down in your orchard! By the Cherry Tree! Quick!"

Toosey starts and runs for the door.

"Here, little girls," Aunt Nancy says, "you take her ragbabies." And away go the three, stumbling down-stairs with a great clatter.

"*T-o-o-t! T-o-o-t!*" Second call.

With a rush the other "little ones" spring

from their hiding-places, and follow after, quite a way behind at first, but getting nearer and nearer as the orchard is reached.

Janet and Emily and Lucetta stand in front of the Surprise, spreading out their gown-skirts so as to make a wide screen.

As the "little ones" get near, Toosey Jackson hurrying along ahead, the three girls that make the screen, speaking in concert, say, as has been arranged among themselves, "How do you do, Jerushy Jackson? Jerushy Jackson, this Mammy Doty is presented to you for a Birthday Present. It is your own—dear, good, little Jerushy Jackson!" And they step aside.

The child was entirely overcome. After a minute, in which she seemed to be taking in the palatial size of her playhouse, she ran and hid her face in her sister Janet's gown-skirt, threw her arms around her, and burst out crying. The other "little ones," half wondering at what was before them, half crying with Toosey, stood motionless. A silence fell upon everybody, upon the whole dear little scene.

Suddenly Emily Alden thought of something. "Oh, Toosey!" she cried—forgetting the "Jerushy"—"do look at our Polly's Great Gomorrah's new pink bunnet and feather!"

This "bunnet" was shaped somewhat like a hat, after the fashion of the day, and Aunt Nancy had made it for Polly's Great Gomorrah to wear to the Surprise and she had stuck in the crown an immensely long rooster-feather.

The little girl slowly raised her head when she was called; and the moment she saw Polly Alden's Great Gomorrah with the new pink bonnet over her frowsy hair and soiled countenance, she giggled out—and *then* the party began.

There was plenty for the "little ones" to do. The corn-cob twins were put to take their naps in the bedroom bed. Lucy Babcock's clothespin children took theirs across the foot, and for the wishbone infants in long clothes a hasty crib was made of an upside-down cricket.

Polly Alden's Great Gomorrah was seated in the front-room, as company come a-visiting; and a few of the nicest-looking rag-babies were placed around as if they were receiving the guest. Others, that looked more as if they had been used to doing housework, were taken to the kitchen and sink-room.

Very soon an oilcloth tablecloth, bearing marks of long service where a good deal of baking and other work was going on, was spread near to Great Gomorrah on a convenient box; and thereon were grandly set out the choicest glass and china that the buttery shelves afforded. When the corn-cob twins and the clothespin children waked up, they were seated around "so as not to sit one-sided hardly any," and when the make-b'lieve sweetened water and other things were passed round the housework girls were allowed to be present and have the same things passed to

them. The two "little ones" that were to pass round the things were chosen by a "counting-out" done by Jerushy herself, as they all stood in a row — thus :

" Intry, mintry, kutry, korn,
 Apple-seed and brier-thorn,
 Wire, briar, limber, lock,
 Five — mice — in a — flock,
 Sit and — sing — in the — spring!
 O — u — t — *Out!*"

At this point, Emily, Janet, and Lucetta Holmes, seeing that all was going on right, strolled carelessly away, but when out of sight broke into a smart run for Emily's house.

The others had arrived, and their heads and "costumes" were being attended to by Aunt Nancy and Phœbe Jackson and Adeline Holmes. 'Lizabeth Ann, having the longest hair and most of it, had had it done up on top and brought round a high top-comb, her side-locks puffed at the temples with side-combs. She wore a green silk calash on her head. Serena had become a small old women with a cane. She was stuffed out a little at the back and wore a shoulder-cape and a muslin cap with plaited ruffle and dark ribbon made in a flat bow at the front.

Others of the girls had puffs, and some had false curls fastened on with little side-combs. Big bonnets were the fashion then, and funny enough those rosy girls looked in them! Some wore a "short-gown and petticoat;" some wore

long trailing gowns, with muslin capes "worked" in nice embroidery. Lucetta Holmes had on her mother's afternoon-cap, of the kind called a "Crazy Jane." It had a flaring frill and a blue ribbon tied in a bow in front.

As each girl was "done," Aunt Nancy set her on the edge of the great high canopy-top bed, first spreading a sheet over it; and in their jubinations the girls fairly shook that high-post bedstead!

When all were ready they proceeded down into the Jackson orchard, one by one, holding up their skirts, dodging along behind trees and bushes, but managing to reach the Orchard Corner at the same time; and there they so startled the "little ones," who were busy carrying away the dishes and tending their "children," that they stood stock-still with whatever they had in their hands, and just stared!

"These are your mothers, children, come to see to you!"

It was Phœbe Jackson who spoke. She and Aunt Emily and Adeline Holmes, and a few of the neighbors with their aprons thrown up over their heads, had come along down on the other side of the wall, and now stood looking over. They declared to each other that they had never in their lives beheld anything so funny!

The "mothers" at once stepped up to the little birthday girl, one at a time, and shook hands with her, each one saluting her the same:

“You have a fine day for your birthday, Jerushy Jackson! I wish you many happy returns!”

And when too much of this made the child look as if she might burst out crying, the “mothers” began to dance up and down, holding out their skirts and making bows and curtsies in the most ridiculous manner, till the smiles, spreading over her little April face, chased the tears away.

The “mothers” then instantly began to “see to” the “little ones” after the manner of mothers. They stroked their hair, smoothed down their skirts, fixed their pantalettes, and wiped their noses. Presently they divided into “families,” and each family went away under a separate tree. There, out in the big sunny orchard, the “mothers” visited each other, taking the “little ones” as their children, sometimes leaving some at home with colds or measles. The conversation ran on their domestic affairs — their spinning, their butter-making, their candle-dipping, and how many teeth the baby had, and which ones were beginning to walk.

But Toosey — little Jerushy — slipped away and went back to her big playhouse. She wanted to see it, and realize that it was hers. Down there alone, in the Orchard Corner, she walked around and looked at everything to her heart’s content — examining one by one all the sink-room utensils, and standing as long as she

liked before the three shelves of pretty china and glassware, and tilting the tea-kettle on the crane, and pushing the kindlings in more snug and neat. In the bedroom she moved very tenderly the babies who were having their naps, smoothed out the pretty rugs and mats, held up one of the "waked-up" children to see its face in the looking-glass, and touched, one by one, softly, the pretty feathers, shells, and bits of ribbon. Then she gave a long, happy sigh.

Oh, it was a most perfect, a most excellent Mammy Doty! Never had she seen a playhouse half so fine!

Aunt Nancy had just come back with her "fried boys" for the Truly Supper. Phœbe Jackson was with her, with a basket of little frosted cakes. She smiled at sight of Toosey walking about all alone in her playhouse, her little hands clasped behind her back. She spoke low to Phœbe: "I could almost envy those three good girls their pleasure in making a little child so happy!"

VI.

"OLD JOHN" AND "YOUNG JOHN."

BUT now it was time for the games to come on. Janet and Emily called to Toosey, and there was a swift scamper across to a more level open spot by the roadside.

If this story had not so much to tell it might wait for the writing down of the words and music of those old-time games in which, for fun, and to show how they went, the larger ones joined in with the "little ones" and sang, at the top of their voices, "Pretty Fair Maid will you come up," and, "We are all a-marching to Quebec."

"There comes the stage! Hurry! Make your curchies!" cried Phœbe Jackson.

And in the midst of the rush along it came — the stage for Boston.

A great event in X-Roads was this daily passing through and back of the Boston stage, with its four horses, its driver perched on high, and its gentleman and lady passengers looking out from its side-windows! For even our commonest carriages were unknown in those days. People had to go horseback or on foot. And

you have no idea how polite the children were to travelers. They were admonished on this point from infancy up: “*Always make your manners to strangers passing by!*”

This meant, for a boy, making a bow; for a girl, a curtesy (commonly called “curchey”). The stage passengers always were given these attentions, and usually returned them with a bow or a smile.

And as the stage plowed through the sandy road that day, the passengers smiled a good deal at sight of that giggling, frolicking crowd in the orchard, rigged out in such funny fashion, standing in line and bobbing their very bobby “curchies” all out of time with each other; and as long as they were in sight, hands and handkerchiefs waved back to the children.

The next to pass along and get bobby curtseys from Toosey Jackson’s party, was a large, elderly man on a tall, bony, white horse, with a woman sitting on a “pillion”—a sort of cushion—behind him, holding herself steady by a girdle around his waist.

This man, John Holmes, a noted hunter, was on his Saturday trip down to X-Roads for his weekly supply of “sweetnin’,” and had taken a neighbor as passenger. He was more commonly known as Old John, that name having been given him years before when there was a Young John, his son, a fine young fellow, afterwards lost at sea.

Nobody ever saw Old John without thinking

of Young John. There wasn't a little girl there under the apple-trees that didn't think of Young John after Old John had ridden by.

Even six-years-old Toosey, in fact all the children of X-Roads, knew of Young John, though he hadn't been heard from for many years and was long ago given up for lost. In that small village there was little of outside news to talk about. Thus at the gatherings at the store and around the kitchen-fire of winter evenings, when the neighbors dropped in, often bringing a girl or boy, the talk, as it always did in the seaport towns of that day, would run upon adventures at sea, and lost sailors, and vessels taken by pirates; and at last it would come round to Young John. What a fine, tall, strong fellow he was, and how handsome, and how eager to get his schooling too, coming down, when a boy, all the way from The Meadows to the school Over the Hill! How he would search the cabins of vessels that came to port for any books the sailors might have brought home!

At first it was not thought strange that no word came from Young John. He seldom had sent any, and in those days letters were costly and were often sent by any chance conveyance. There were no regular mails across the sea, no steamers.

When Janet and others of the girls played at "making-up stories" they would invent, from what they had heard, the most wonderful

and horrible tales of sailors who had been shipwrecked “with all on board,” or had been cast away on desert islands, or every one murdered by pirates, or eaten by cannibals, or kept for slaves. Occasionally a hero — in these stories usually Young John — would be saved alive in some wondrous way, and come home, and land at the wharf Over the Hill, bringing such things as vessels sometimes did bring there, — pretty waxworks, and shells, and cordials, and tamarind preserves.

Emily Alden always claimed special right in telling tales of Young John’s return; for the reason that before the Aldens moved down from Bridgton and bought the old Lawson House, Gaffer and Gammer Lawson used sometimes during his school-days to invite him to stay overnight in case of great storms.

VII.

AN UPSETTING AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

As Old John and the woman and the horse disappeared, a sudden "*T-o-o-o-o-o-t!*" called the party to the Truly Supper, which indeed it was; and although the "fried boys" got twisted in the frying, did not the cloves stuck in for eyes show which was the face side?

At Aunt Nancy's bidding, the older girls started on a tight run for her great flower-garden, and brought back their hands full of bachelor's-buttons, clove pinks, bouncing-bets, London-pride, touch-me-nots, four-o'clocks and sweet-williams for decorating the table. And a pretty sight it was — the whole scene! The snow-white tablecloth, the bright flowers, the plates of cakes, the quaint pitchers and tumblers, the children in their picturesque clothes sitting around against chance rocks or trunks of trees, some of whose old crooked branches bent low enough for seats, while here and there a very smart and very giggling one of the "little ones" would perch herself on a crotch in the boughs above, and peep through the leaves ready for whatever dainty might be handed up.

The repast was just about finished, when suddenly appeared among them an uninvited guest whose name was Caper. He came rattling in at a furious rate, bringing his roller-cart. The rattling was made by something in the cart. He had been Over the Hill with a bundle, as was learned afterwards, and in coming back home had lost Lyddy and was crazy to find her.

Now as to what rattled, we ought to beg its pardon — considering it helped to name this story — for so late a mention, and for being introduced in such a ridiculous manner. Though only a humble flatiron, it had a grand name, and was well-known in X-Roads as “Granny’s Unicorn.” It had been thus named from a curious one-horned figure stamped upon it. It differed from its common kind of relatives in being much smaller, and much more pointed, and in having a much finer polish. On these accounts it was now and then borrowed for very nice and delicate ironing, and especially for men’s ruffled shirt-bosoms; and Phœbe Jackson and Adeline Holmes were glad to get hold of Granny’s Unicorn when doing up their fine worked tuckers. Moreover, it was owing to so much borrowing — but this belongs to another part of the story and will have to wait.

But Granny’s Unicorn did not have to wait on that gala-day in the orchard. In his swift career to find Lyddy, Caper flew here and there, under the table, in among the children, into the front-yard of the Mammy Doty, even into its

front-room, where he knocked Great Gomorrah over, and mixed up the corncob twins and the wishbone infants in long-clothes; then hitting the tea-kettle, and knocking down the slender-legged table with the handkerchief over its shoulder. Then out he rushed, still frantic; and when at last the cart itself was overturned against a stump, and Caper had been held still long enough for it to be righted — it was found to be empty.

Away went Caper and the cart — and then such a hunt as there was for the Unicorn! While the grown-up ones poked with sticks, the children crawled swiftly here and there, arms outstretched, fingers feeling in among the grass, hurrying, meeting, turning, till the party was exactly like an ants' nest broken up!

Aunt Nancy, seeing there were plenty to do the searching, stepped aside to help Toosey repair damages in the Mammy Doty, and in so doing she caught sight of something light-colored like a gown-skirt over across among some high bushes, nearly opposite a gap in the wall; and at the same instant, Mr. Caper came rattling along again, his head up, snuffing the air, saying as well as he could, "Where is she? She is here somewhere!" As he reached the gap he gave a glad little yelp, and dashed straight through, breaking a wheel short off in his sharp turn, and ran into the bushes.

What could be the matter with Caper? Aunt Nancy thought she knew. Calling Phœbe Jack-

son and Adeline Holmes to help the "little ones" gather up their dolls and start for home, she followed Caper through the gap.

Back of a tall clump of bushes she saw Lyddy, Granny's child, crouched on the ground, sobbing. Caper, cart and all, with his paws on her shoulders and the cart half in her lap, and the harness in a tangle, was seeking to comfort her.

Neither of them saw Aunt Nancy, and she stood still a moment in silence. Poor little child of the hut on T'other-side! She had been staying in the pasture, among the bushes, watching the party!

Aunt Nancy hardly knew what to do. She could only sit down by the child, and put Caper to one side, and ask kind questions which were answered only by motions of the head. Would Lyddy come into the orchard with Aunt Nancy? No! Would she like some cake? No! Or a Doughnut Boy? No! Might Aunt Nancy put her arm round Lyddy? Yes; and with a fresh burst of tears Lyddy let her head drop on Aunt Nancy's shoulder. Would she come to the store before sunset to get a few things that were to go to Granny's? "Yes" — in a whisper.

This, with a walk part way home with her, was the best plan Aunt Nancy could then think of for seeing more of the child.

But who comes here?

The Unicorn had been found, and the

“mothers” had taken the “little ones” and gone over to Emily Alden’s to make themselves ready for home. Then it was that Toosey (still lingering about her great playhouse) got sight of Aunt Nancy, and hearing Caper, came skipping across to see what was going on there among the bushes.

Aunt Nancy had a bright thought. She said to Toosey, “Don’t you want to show Lyddy your Mammy Doty?”

Indeed Toosey did. She put out her hand, and Lyddy got up and took hold of it, rather bashfully; and away went the two through the gap and across to the Orchard Corner, noisy Caper, frisky Caper, leaping ahead with his broken cart, and leaping back, every bark a shout for joy, and saying almost in words, “Oh, I *am* so glad! I *am* so glad!”

And dear Aunt Nancy looked on, almost with tears in her eyes, as little Toosey, full of pity for one who had not even seen the Mammy Doty, showed her, one by one, the prettiest things in the bedroom, and her choicest china and glass; and tearful Lyddy actually laughed when she saw the corncob twins.

There was a “fried boy” left; and Toosey brought her that and a couple of little sugar-sprinkled cookies, besides one of the ripe plums, and hurried to give Caper a cake before he should wag his tail off with begging.

“They made me this Mammy Doty,” Toosey explained, “because I am six years old. I wish

you would stop and play with me in my Mammy Doty, when you go home nights.

Lyddy put her arm around the child. "I'll ask Granny," she said, a more cheerful expression lighting up her face — an intelligent face, Aunt Nancy thought it, with a remarkably pleasant look about the eyes.

Lyddy stood looking at the china and glass ware and the tin basins. A sudden pretty smile came into her eyes.

"I get 'findin's,' too," she said, taking up one of them. "I put water and something to truly eat in mine."

"Oh, do you have a Mammy Doty?" asked Toosey.

"No," said Lyddy, laughing.

"Then where do you put your 'findin's'?" asked Toosey.

"Oh — in good places."

"Outdoors?"

"Yes."

"And do you have children?" asked Toosey, taking up one of the ragbabies.

"No — oh, yes, I do, too!" laughing again, as if mightily tickled.

"Could Toosey and I come and see it all?" asked Aunt Nancy.

Toosey's countenance showed so much anxiety for the answer that Lyddy could not help laughing. "Yes, indeed!" she said, looking up with a roguish smile at Aunt Nancy. "Come right after school. Come Wednesday after-

noon, because school leaves off early then. And, Toosey! bring your huckleberry basket! I know some thick spots!"

And thus it happened that the next Wednesday afternoon Aunt Nancy and Toosey set off on a walk over T'other-side, to see what Toosey persisted in calling, "Lyddy's Mammy Doty."

VIII.

T'OTHER-SIDE.

AUNT NANCY had never seen a great deal of Granny and Lyddy. They came there before the Aldens moved down from Bridgton to take the old Lawson house; and she knew Granny only as an honest, hard-working woman who lived the other side of the brook, near the woods, and supported herself and Lyddy.

When the other girls had gone home, after the party, she questioned Emily and Janet.

Why had Lyddy not been invited?

They had nothing to say against her; they — didn't think very much about it, or else thought maybe she would not be wanted, as the girls didn't "go round" with her any.

Was not Lyddy a well-behaved girl at school? Oh, yes! Was she a poor scholar? Oh, no! she had been up to the head a great many times.

Was she in their class? Yes. Was it not unkind, then, to leave her out? The girls looked at each other; but neither seemed able to give an answer, and Aunt Nancy thought it best to say no more just then.

Wednesday afternoon was pleasant. Aunt Nancy and Toosey found Granny sitting in the doorway, having in her lap the "Easy Lessons" — a child's reader, and with it a small, square, old-fashioned dictionary.

She arose to invite them in; but Aunt Nancy took a seat on a nice, clean wash-bench near the door, and Lyddy and Toosey sat down on the flat stone step.

It was a pretty place. Woodsy kinds of trees circled around; the birds were numerous, and Aunt Nancy was surprised to see them so tame, hopping over the ground, even coming quite near.

Toosey whispered that she would like to see the Mammy Doty. Lyddy smiled, and took Toosey's hand; and Aunt Nancy arose, too, and they went around to one side of the hut, where it was shady, yet open and pretty, and some white-barked birches grew, their happy little leaves rustling softly in the gentle breeze, whispering to each other. It was quite grassy, but still there was a garden look about the place. Some old barberry bushes were in blossom, quite spangled over with their little yellow-gilded flowers; and near by some elderberry bushes, heavy with flat, snow-white disks of bloom. There was a row of sunflowers, too, and a little seat.

Aunt Nancy sat down on the bench; but Toosey stood, looking all around and far away. "Where is the Mammy Doty?" she asked.

"Why, all this is it," replied Lyddy. And

then Aunt Nancy called Toosey's attention to the "findings" which, in the shape of old cups and bowls and tin porringers, and a shallow pan or two, were to be seen in various "good places" near the bushes.

From a chicken-coop under one of the elderberry bushes came forth some little yellow, fluffy baby chickens, a motherly old white hen in charge. They went to drink from a shallow pan, dipping in their bills, and at each dip lifting them up, as if to give thanks. Afterwards they went to another pan and ate meal-mush, and after that nipped a little grass. Lyddy scattered some grain for them, too, broken wheat, whereupon flocks of little brown birds came flying down out of the numerous trees, and went hopping about, eating with the chickens, and helping themselves to whatever they liked in the various other Mammy Doty "findings."

But Toosey had frequently seen birds and chickens eating together, and she didn't take so very much interest until suddenly Lyddy began to whistle, first softly, then a little louder, then a little louder still—a bird-note kind of whistle. Three yellowbirds came, as if in answer, and lighted at one side where, on a rude trellis made of sticks, sweet-peas were in bloom, and began to bite and eat the flowers. Lyddy said she and Granny made the trellis and planted the vines, because yellowbirds were fond of sweet-peas. The birds were very tame, and didn't mind Aunt Nancy and Toosey being there.

The sunflowers, Lyddy explained, were planted purposely for food for birds in winter, when snow covers everything, so that they can get no seeds from the pine cones, or among the bushes, or even in swamps. At such times, she said, the chickadees filled the woods and thickets, and came flocking down near the hut. She left the barberries for them, she said, and they would light on the bushes in clouds.

“You have a great many children to feed in your playhouse, haven’t you?” said Aunt Nancy. “And they won’t eat make-believes, like Toosey’s children, will they?”

Little Toosey laughed. She was beginning to see Lyddy’s Mammy Doty.

For the last moment Lyddy had been making a queer kind of chirruping sound with her mouth. It was soft, yet distinct and very clearly to be heard. She made it several times, as if she were calling something; and Toosey looked everywhere, anxious to see something come. And what do you think came? Two lovely gray squirrels, with rich fur and bright eyes, and great handsome tails. They ran down the trunk of a venerable oak, and came and sat down in front of Lyddy, curled their tails over their heads and looked up at her as if waiting. They must have noticed Toosey and Aunt Nancy, but they gave no sign. Lyddy took some corn from her pocket and scattered it around. The squirrels ate a little, and then, to Toosey’s astonishment, came up

Lyddy's dress and into her lap. Toosey was almost afraid; but Lyddy tapped their furry cheeks, and let them come up on her shoulder and sit close to her face. After a moment she took three or four nuts from her pocket, and dropped them on the ground; and then Toosey saw the beautiful creatures carry them away in their mouths, one by one, and bury them. Just as long as Lyddy's supply lasted they bounded back and forth between the old oak and the little seat.

Toosey looked up with a pleased smile. Then she got down from her seat. "*I should like to have a live Mammy Doty!*" she said.

Aunt Nancy smiled, too. "It is a lovely one, a dear one, Lyddy. If you will let Toosey and the girls"—

But suddenly they hear shoutings and barkings and rattlings and callings.

You will wonder where Caper has been all this time. At the carpenter's, waiting for the mending of his cart. This is he now, bringing the cart and the Unicorn; and with him have come Janet and Emily and Lucetta, to walk back with Aunt Nancy and Toosey.

Aunt Nancy says there is still time to go for huckleberries, and away they speed—five girls and a dog. And Aunt Nancy goes inside with Granny, thinking how good it is that this child, with only Granny and Caper to love, has found close about her nature's delightful companionship.

IX.

WHISPERS.

EVERYTHING in the hut was snug and neat. The spinning-wheel stood back in one corner. A draw-curtain of chintz hid most of the pans, kettles, and pails from sight. There was an old pitcher with flowers in it upon the table.

Garments hung quite near Aunt Nancy; among them a long, red broadcloth cloak, so rich in color that it lighted up the room, shining out like a great red rose-bush in full bloom.

"Oh, what a beautiful cloak!" said Aunt Nancy. "Remarkably nice heavy cloth! Don't you ever wear it?"

A strange expression came upon Granny's face. It was a minute or two before she spoke.

"Yes, it *is* a handsome cloak," she said at last; "and comfortable, very. It is warm — and it comforts me. When I've been clear discouraged that cloak has heartened me up — oh — many's the time!"

"But I don't ever wear it," she added, after a pause. "That cloak, Miss Alden, belonged to Lyddy's mother. Lyddy'll have it, sometime — and all it's worth."

Aunt Nancy thought that Granny had a rather mysterious way of speech, but passed it by.

“Lyddy’s mother—do tell me something about Lyddy’s mother,” she said.

Granny did not speak at once. She seemed disturbed. “I want to,” she said, finally. “I do want to talk with you. I ought to talk with somebody—I know that. But I should like to wait a little. I’m not certain it’s best for Lyddy—quite yet. But I know somebody, some one person, ought to be told. I’m getting old—something may happen to me. And I do feel you’d be the right person, Miss Alden. I’ve thought, sometimes, that I would go to you. I *will* tell you *one* thing.”

Granny drew closer, leaned forward, and spoke low: “Lyddy is not my grandchild, Miss Alden.”

“How did you come by her, then?” asked Aunt Nancy, also speaking low. “Not your grandchild! But she has your name, Lydia Brennan. Isn’t it her own name?”

Another pause. “Isn’t it her own?” Aunt Nancy repeated.

“That name was given to her rightful,” said Granny after a moment.

“And wasn’t it her father’s name?”

“It was *my* name,” said Granny with some warmth. “And my Lyddy wears it rightful and true.”

“Granny, Mrs. Brennan,” said Aunt Nancy,

taking Granny's hand in her own. "Tell me, won't you. What was her father's and what was her mother's name?"

"Oh, that's just what I mustn't, Miss Alden; not now, not yet," said Granny. "But my Lyddy is true, good blood; true as anybody's in *this* town! I'll tell you how I know it. I lived in the same house three years with her mother. I was a Nova Scotia woman and came down to Portland; and when I was left a widow I had my room in a boarding-house, and did washing and ironing. And Lyddy's mother was in the same house. A young English woman, she was, and kept a school for little girls, where they learned to read and spell and do nice needlework — all kinds of stitches on cambric, silks, muslins, satins — everything. She was a great lover of books. She owned the Simple Susan books, and I've got 'em all laid away — 'Lazy Lawrence' — all of 'em — for Lyddy. And she fell in love with the mate of a vessel that coasted between Portland and the Southern places, and he the same with her, and they married — and maybe you know how it used to be with sailors havin' to leave their sweethearts, and their wives and their families. After long waiting he got a chance to go mate on a voyage way over t'other side the world, and — that's all. He never came back; nor the ship. Oh, how I did pity that heart-broke young mother, crying over her baby. 'Twas hard to see her a-waitin' and a-hopin' and

a-watchin', and finally wearing her life away! I was there with her and a-standin' her friend and helper as well as one like me could. I knew it all, *all!*" said Granny, her voice trembling. "But of course," she added, "*you* can't never know. Nobody could."

Aunt Nancy drew up very close to Granny, and, taking her hand, said, in a voice as low as Granny's, "I *do* know. I had a sailor lover. *He* never came back. It was when we lived in Bridgton. He belonged in New Bedford. We were going to live there."

"And did *you* wait, and hope, and look, and expect — day after day? day after day?"

"No," said Aunt Nancy. "His family in New Bedford got a letter from an American sailor who saw him die, and saw him buried."

"Then you *can't* know," said Granny. "It was the watchin' and waitin' and hopin' and cryin', and givin' up hope, that wore her out, and so the poor thing pined away. I took care of her, and loved her; but she faded out, and *went*. Foreseein' this, and that the child — Lyddy, you know — would be left behind, she'd given me directions to have all her goods sold, except the Unicorn flatiron that was my weddin' gift to her, and her Simple Susan books that her father bought for her in England, and this red broadcloth cloak that was her sailor's weddin' present. These three things I was never to part with."

"And she gave you the child?" Aunt Nancy asked.

Granny was slow in answering. "I can't say that," she said. "But she put her in my hands to give away, when — when I could make her instructions come right. But" — here Granny stopped again.

"Don't you think it would be better to tell me more," asked Aunt Nancy, kindly, after a while. "Don't you think I'd better know those instructions?"

"Maybe I'd better tell you *some* of them," said Granny. "I was to take the child and go by coasters — the cheapest way — to the place where her father came from, and make careful inquiries about her kindred livin' there, and give her as a present from the child's mother to the one most likely to see that she had good schoolin'.

"And I have got as far as *here* in obeying my instructions," said Granny, after a pause, at the same time getting up as if to show that she had finished.

But Aunt Nancy persisted, and would not release her hand. "What town was it?" she asked. "Couldn't you find it? Why are you staying here? And so long! There must be some reason! Won't you tell me?"

Granny released herself, almost forcibly. She went to the door and stood, looking out. Aunt Nancy could see how nervously the thin old hands worked and grasped each other, and the tremulous twitching of her lips.

"I believe, Granny," she said, after watching

her a few minutes, "that this ought to be told to *somebody*, if not to me. It will comfort you afterward to think that you have secured Lyddy another friend, another guardian."

Granny sat down again. "Miss Alden," she said, "*you* don't know how bad it *might* prove to be for Lyddy, and *I* do."

"But suppose anything were to happen to you, and hinder you from telling even the name of the town," Aunt Nancy whispered.

"Yes!" said Granny when she spoke again. "No doubt I ought to tell *that*. And you are good. You are her friend. I'll tell you so much." Leaning forward she spoke one word, very softly.

"Yes," said Aunt Nancy, as softly. "And now, what was his name, Mrs. Brennan?"

Granny walked a few steps away, then back, then stooped and spoke in Aunt Nancy's ear.

Aunt Nancy saw nothing especially strange in what had been disclosed to her, that is to say, nothing unlikely.

"Not strange at all!" she said to herself. Yet was her heart full of a feeling so very strange that it almost made her faint with thankfulness.

She smiled at Granny. "But why, *why*," she asked, "should it be any harm to tell this? To tell it all?"

"Why 'cause — don't you see?" And here Granny spoke in whispers again. Then she

said aloud, as she sat down by Aunt Nancy, "I I couldn't approve of *that!* I couldn't give up my little Lyddy *that way!* It's going to most kill me to give her up any way!"

"I see! You good, true, faithful woman!" said Aunt Nancy, taking Granny's hand in both of her own. "No doubt you've done wisely. And you ought not to be separated from Lyddy. I have seen enough of her already to know what a nice child she is, and how dear she must be to you!"

"Still, my Lyddy ought to have her chances; her good schoolin'. I know it! I know it well!" said Granny, in tears now. "I don't know *what* ought to be done — but I *couldn't* give her *there!* She wouldn't get her chances *there*, Miss Alden. You know it!"

"Well, 'twill all come right yet. We two together shall find out what to do, somehow," said Aunt Nancy cheerily. "I'm so glad I know all this that you've told me!"

"I used to hope her father would come and find her somehow," said Granny, as if glad to talk. "I couldn't read much. I've tried to teach myself, along with Lyddy helpin', so I could spell out the ship-news. But I never find nothin'."

The sudden inrush of Caper announced that the girls were not far off.

"Does Lyddy know she had that good father, and about her mother?" asked Aunt Nancy hurriedly.

“I’ve never talked much that way,” said Granny in low tones. “It seemed best not to. She knows that when she was a baby her mother died; and knows, too, that when she was a baby her father went to sea and never was heard from. She thinks I’m her Granny, and that seems best, and to have her called by my name — for a while — but not too long. *Something* will have to be done. She’s growin’ up. She’ll have to take her father’s name. You’ll have to think it out. *And*, Miss Alden, if anything *should* happen to me, you take good care of that red cloak for her.

And here Granny again spoke in whispers, telling something evidently of very great importance, and finishing hastily at the near sound of voices.

The merry rovers came skipping in, rosy and laughing; and as Aunt Nancy glanced at Lyddy’s bright face she felt that to make a rightful place for her with girls of her own age, was not going to be one of the cares which the talk with Granny had caused her to take upon herself.

In fact, the girls spent the very next Saturday afternoon at T’other-side, and afterwards came in great glee to tell Aunt Nancy all about it.

“Oh!” said Emily. “*Such* a good time! Granny showed us how to make some English cakes, and we baked them over the coals in her creeper. And she knows ever so many songs. I mean to learn that funny one about ‘Yonder

he be!’ This is the way it goes: ‘*His waist-coat it is pink and oh, yonder he be! And he loves me I think, oh, yonder he be! He’s a bonny conny lad and I loves him too!*’ And there are more verses.”

“Granny keeps one foot a-going while she sings — *this way!*” said Janet, “and makes motions with her chin — *this way!*”

“And now and then she snaps her fingers — *this way!*” said Lucetta. “And Lyddy hops to the time of them.”

“You have had a good time,” said Aunt Nancy, laughing. “Just invite me when you go again. I want to hear all the verses of ‘*Oh, yonder he be!*’”

X.

THE UNICORN'S MESSAGE.

It was a dark snowy evening in November; but the Aldens' big kitchen was warm and bright, for in its spacious fireplace a blazing fire lighted up the long room, from the bedroom and buttery doors, at one end, to the rows of shining pewter platters and porringers on the "dresser" at the other.

Now and then some horseback traveler was heard to pass; but the weather was threatening, and for the most part families were all at home, sheltered from the swift-falling snow.

The stage from Boston had not been heard to go by. It was late that evening. Emily and Polly and Calvin were long before in bed. Mr. Alden sat half-dozing at one side of the fireplace. Mrs. Alden was carding wool for her next day's spinning. Aunt Nancy was reading at the candle-stand.

"I do believe somebody or other is knocking at our front-door!" said Mrs. Alden, suddenly laying down her cards. "Who can it be!" For in X-Roads no one ever thought of knocking. Aunt Nancy said she had just thought she heard something stop.

Another knock. Mr. Alden went to look, and found a man standing on the doorstep, stamping off the snow. Quite a large man, a stranger.

The man asked Mr. Alden for Gaffer Lawson or Gammer Lawson. In former times, he said, they had sometimes taken in people in need of a night's lodging. He had now called for that, as he expected to hire a horse in the morning and go farther.

Mr. Alden told him that Gaffer and Gammer Lawson had been some years dead, and that he had moved into the place and bought the house. Then he gave him a hearty invitation to come in and pass the night.

Mrs. Alden and Aunt Nancy hearing this — the entry door standing open — started both at once to make the stranger welcome, Mrs. Alden stopping to shove the tea-kettle along over the hottest place.

The stranger walked in with his little trunk — a hair-covered, round-topped one, studded with brass nails, of the kind then in common use. Aunt Nancy slipped out to see to a bed being made comfortable. Mrs. Alden snuggled up her wool, seated the stranger by the fire, and in a few minutes had made him a cup of tea and drawn up a small table, and sat him out a plentiful meal.

During his supper the man asked a few questions about Gaffer and Gammer Lawson, but did not make much talk.

Aunt Nancy came and took away the tea-things, and then sat down with her knitting, and Mrs. Alden did the same. Mr. Alden asked a few questions about the weather on towards Boston, which were answered politely, though in few words.

Mrs. Alden, having noticed that the guest ate too little for a traveler, and that he sat uneasily in his chair and cast his eyes unrestfully about, was sure that something ailed him, and that he ought to have a good mugful of hot motherwort tea, made peppery with one of the red peppers that hung by a string over the mantlepiece.

While mentally deciding between motherwort and catnip, she was startled to see the stranger step to the fireplace and closely examine Granny's Unicorn, which Aunt Nancy had brought home for doing up her muslins.

"This seems to be not of American make," he said, looking at the mark stamped upon it.

"No," said Mrs. Alden, glad of something to say. "We call that the 'Unicorn.' You see the stamp on it. We borrow it, once in a while, from a poor woman living in a little hut over the other side the brook, 'bout half a mile off. She isn't native to these parts."

Then she went on to tell various things about the poor woman who came there, before they moved into the place, with her grandchild, Lyddy, a little girl at that time about two years old, now nine, or thereabouts.

“I think you did not mention her name,” said the stranger, after a pause.

“She usually goes by the name of Granny. I really don’t know her last name; but I think her given name is Sylvie.”

“Her name,” said Aunt Nancy, “is Sylvie Brennan.”

The stranger, who appeared to be getting more and more restless, said no more. He walked away from the hearth, looked out the window, glanced at the clock, which said half-past nine — an extremely late hour for X-Roads — went again to the window, walked several times across the floor, and finally took up his little trunk, and Mr. Alden went with him up to his chamber.

Mrs. Alden began at once to prepare the pepper tea.

“For I know I shall be called up in the night,” she said to Aunt Nancy. “That man’s feverish. He’s a little *out*. No man in his full senses would take so much notice of a flatiron, or ask so many questions about anybody he never saw or heard of. And what’s the matter with *you*? You’re trembling like a leaf! You’ve caught a sudden cold. I’ll get *you* something to take!”

“Oh, I’m all right!” said Aunt Nancy, and slipped away to her chamber.

And there she clasped her hands, and walked the floor, and laughed and cried both together, and offered up prayers of thankfulness. For

oh, it *was*, it *was* the very one! He *had* come back! He *had*! He *had*! "And he remembers Granny!" she laughed. He feels sure that child is his — and he hadn't even known she was alive! Joy! Joy! Joy! — why, of course! of course! It must be the one! It can be no other! Were not the initials in brass-nail letters on the top of his trunk? Dear Lyddy! Dear Granny! Will morning never come?"

Joy brought Aunt Nancy a wakeful night. At the first peep of day she heard their guest go softly down and out.

The Unicorn had brought him a message!

CHAPTER XI.

IN GRANNY'S HUT.

GRANNY was preparing breakfast for herself and Lyddy in the gray of the November morning when she caught sight of a man, a stranger, walking about the place, in the snow, and now and then looking towards her windows. She had not seen him coming up the path, and it startled her. Caper saw him, too, at about the same moment, and in an instant had his paws on the window-sill, barking furiously.

Lyddy went to look; but just then the man turned, and came to the doorstep and knocked. At this Caper barked worse than ever, and Lyddy nearly fell over him as she went to open the door.

The man stepped inside and closed the door. Lyddy thought he seemed a very nice man, a kindly kind of man. Probably some visitor in the place needing washing done, she thought. But he still waited by the door, looking very earnestly down upon her.

“Whose little girl is this?” he asked, at last.

“Granny Brennan’s,” said Lyddy.

“I wish you’d be *my* little girl,” he said, extending his hand.

Lyddy drew back, looking towards Granny, who had stopped to place her bannocks up against the andirons to brown, but was now coming forward.

The stranger had removed his hat; and as Granny stepped nearer she gave him a long, steady look. "Almighty God!" she exclaimed. "John Holmes! Lyddy, come here to me!" she begged, and sank upon the floor, crying aloud like a little child.

Lyddy looked at the man almost in terror, as he hurried by her to Granny, and the look seemed to agitate him even more than Granny's words. "Sylvie," said he, "tell her, tell her!"

Granny was trying to sit up, trying, too, to calm herself. "I will, John," she said, "just as soon as I can," and when fairly on her feet she did lead Lyddy to the stranger.

"Lyddy," she said in a voice that trembled, "you know your father was a sailor and never came back from sea. You know that I had hopes that he would, and he has—he stands right here with us now. Lyddy, this is your father, really your father!"

Lyddy looked at him and began to cry. The stranger drew her towards him, tears in his own eyes; and all this so enraged Caper, that he seemed to be flying at the whole group, though his aim was just to seize and bite the man's hand.

This act of Caper's was the best thing that could have happened; for in trying to quiet him

Lyddy quieted herself, and as John Holmes and Granny could not but laugh at the great bluster the little dog made, by the time Caper went off to his bone their tears had got dried.

"You must call him father," whispered Granny, as they shut the door on Caper. Then she sat down, letting breakfast wait. "John Holmes," she said, "where did you come from?"

Lyddy had not refused to go to her father; and now before he could answer she started up from his shoulder, for at the sound of his name again, all the talk she had heard about John Holmes came rushing to her mind. "Oh, Granny!" she cried, "is my father Young John? Is he?"

"Yes, Lyddy," said her father and Granny together, both smiling at the expression on the child's face.

The wonderful fact seemed too much for Lyddy to contain. After a moment she sank back, and her father put his arm around her again. There her thoughts dwelt upon what Janet would say, and Lucetta, and Emily Alden. The hero of all the stories was her father!

"Where did I come from, Sylvie?" John Holmes repeated. "Many places. So many that I feel almost like an old man, Sylvie. But just now from Portland. Not a trace of her, or of you, could I find — only the gravestone! Then I came here to learn who of my friends were yet among the living. I heard of father at once from the stage-driver and from an old

hunter who came part way from Boston in the stage. But I did not hear of you."

Lyddy had started up again. "Why, father!" she exclaimed, "is Old John my grandfather?"

"Doesn't my child know that?" he asked Granny, in surprise.

"No," said Granny, but waited to tell *her* story later — how she had feared lest Old John should claim his granddaughter, and take her up to The Meadows to live with the dogs and the hunters, where she could get no "schooling;" and how she had kept everything to herself in order to carry out the instructions received from the child's mother.

"Yes, my child," said her father. "Old John is your grandfather, and this very afternoon we will go up and see him. *He* won't be so very much surprised to see *me*, but he *will* be surprised to see *you*, Lyddy! He always used to say he should never give me up as lost, for I always came unexpected."

"I guess," said Lyddy, starting up again and interrupting them, "that we won't let my grandfather live way up there alone, will we, father?"

"I guess we won't," he replied, "unless he'd rather. But he loves his hunting-grounds, and he may not like to leave them. Many nice people fond of hunting come to see him there, I hear; and did you know that all the Holmeses Over the Hill were your cousins?"

"She don't know anything about them," said Granny. "I had either got to give her up

to some of them, or to her grandfather, or else keep silent."

Lyddy hardly seemed to realize what they were saying. She cared nothing for any of "the Holmeses." It was quite all she could take in — that she had a father and a grandfather. If Granny's words roused any feeling in the child it was that it would have been something not to be thought of — that she should go away from Granny.

"Well, I guess this little girl has been pretty well brought up," said he, with a grateful look at Granny. "I guess she's been kept in the right hands. It's all right, Sylvie."

Granny looked pleased. "After breakfast you shall hear Lyddy read and spell," she said, "and see what fine sewing she can do. Her mother was anxious about that."

"No money can ever repay you, Sylvie," said he. "But money! we are all poor together. For, Sylvie, I have hardly twenty dollars in the world! But I can work; there are plenty of things I can do, even on land. For I shall never go to sea again, Sylvie, my travels are done. I never could leave this child! I never mean to."

"Oh! you are not so very poor, John," said Granny. She got up and took down the red cloak, and laid it in his lap, over Lyddy, and stood waiting.

Lyddy sat up, and looked at Granny in wonder. Lyddy's father sat up too, and took

the cloak. A new expression came on his face. He looked like another man. He had forgotten his young wife's cloak — the beautiful red cloak he had given her on that wintry wedding-day.

Granny looked at him, smiling. "It's all there, John," she said, "just as you and she hemmed it in. She never had to use it, and I have never had to. She told me to, in case of need. We've got along, and I wanted to save it for Lyddy. But it has been a comfort, John — *such* a comfort to know it was there! Why don't you open it?"

He took out his knife, and ran the sharp blade carefully along a section of the deep hem and brought to light two Bank of England notes; of large denomination they were too. He turned away from the sight with pure gratitude to heaven! And then old feelings rushed over him. How well he remembered the time, and the very room, where he stood over his bonny brown-haired young wife and saw her sew those notes in! It was the day after their wedding, and the notes represented all he had saved from his voyages.

Granny's lips trembled too — but Granny was thinking of the future. And Lyddy understood far more than she could have told them, at least she understood dear Granny's part in it! How many times she had seen dear Granny stand before the beautiful red cloak and pat it softly — dear Granny, always at the washtub and ironing table!

XII.

AFTERWARD.

THE bannocks were cold, the tea had boiled and spoiled, the fried eggs were hard, but still it was a strangely happy breakfast, even though Granny and Lyddy were listening to a wild sad story.

It was a tale of shipwreck and long captivity, of escape and of waiting afterward for home-bound vessels. Oh, it was *so* like the stories Emily and Janet used to imagine, with Young John for the hero!

They sat long by the homely little table in the hut, for he had to tell Granny how it was that by noticing the English flatiron on the Aldens' mantelpiece he had learned that Mrs. Sylvie Brennan and a little girl named Lyddy were living close by. Only for the Unicorn he would have gone early up to see his father, and away, and not even heard of them.

"I had seen you use that iron many times in our rooms, Sylvie, in the old housekeeping in Portland!" he said. "It seemed as if there could not be another, in this place, so exactly the same. I feel as if we had had a narrow

escape, Sylvie — you and this little girl and her father!”

“Oh, Aunt Nancy would have guessed you out before you had gone far!” said Granny; “not Mrs. Alden, but the pleasant-faced one with the beautiful dark eyes. She’s our best friend. She’s the only one that knows all about us. I *had* to tell somebody in case anything should happen to *me* and Lyddy be left.”

Mrs. Alden had been saying, while clearing away breakfast, that she knew that poor man was out of his head, and likely as not had got up before light and wandered off Over the Hill and jumped off the wharf; and Aunt Nancy was laughing about it in the strangest fashion; and Emily was thinking that her auntie “acted queer,” when Lyddy and Caper came bursting in at the end porch-door, ahead of Granny and the stranger.

“Oh, *Emily!* EMILY! What *do* you think! Young John is my father! And he’s come! And Old John is my grandfather, and we’re going up there this afternoon!”

Mrs. Alden and Emily looked at Lyddy as if she had suddenly gone out of her mind. But Aunt Nancy said quietly, “I knew it last night, Lyddy! And I am *so* glad for you and Granny! Weeks ago I knew that Young John was your father! And I knew him last night.”

“*How* did you know him?” cried Mrs. Alden, in astonishment.

“By his questions about the Unicorn,” she said, “and by the initials on his trunk!”

And then she got up, and threw her arms around Granny’s neck, as the two came in, and cried with her for utter gladness; and Lyddy’s father saw that “the woman at Mrs. Alden’s” had indeed “beautiful dark eyes;” and he thought of the little salt-water-soaked Testament he had managed to carry safe for her so many years, and now could give to her from her dead lover buried in far Ceylon. Granny had told him her story on the way over. He had never expected to see her and tell her all the story! For it was he who had written the New Bedford letter.

Emily, after one strange bewildered look at the mysterious hero of so many make-believe tales, left Lyddy there and almost literally “ran herself to pieces,” to get to Janet Jackson and Lucetta. And whoever got the news, men or women, left whatever they were doing, and went with all possible speed to tell it to the next persons.

For it was *such* news! Young John had returned! He was Lyddy Brennan’s father! He was at Mr. Alden’s! He wanted to meet all his old acquaintances!

The news sped Over the Hill, and up to The Meadows, of course, so that Old John trotted out his best horse, and came down before Young John and Lyddy got started for their visit to see him in his home.

And afterward ?

Young John's first thought was to make a home for himself and Lyddy and Granny. He felt that Over the Hill would be the best place, because there his little girl could have somewhat better "chances" for "schooling," including fine needlework, than were obtainable in X-Roads.

With the Red Cloak money he bought a large old house there, taking part of it for a store, which, partly by the aid of old friends, he was able to fit out on quite a large scale.

There he prospered ; and there Lyddy made the acquaintance of her cousins, the Holmses," But it was Emily and Janet and Lucetta that Lyddy clung to and visited oftenest.

The friendship between Lyddy and Aunt Nancy, which began among the bushes on the Mammy Doty afternoon, grew closer as time went on ; and Lyddy's father kept up his acquaintance with the Alden family and often drove over to X-Roads to carry Lyddy, and to bring Lyddy home again.

Finally there came to pass the happy thing X-Roads and Over the Hill had long prophesied and expected — the blessed thing Granny had hoped for and Lyddy wished for, and that Lyddy's father could hardly believe would ever be possible — a mother to Lyddy — her dear Aunt Nancy !

And Phœbe Jackson and the other big girls must have been planning for this very event ! At a word from them, Janet's set, and

even Toosey and Polly and all the "little ones," began a Secret Surprise. Each was to make a square of patchwork of pieces of her own gowns, and the grown-up girls were to put them together and quilt them into a bed-quilt.

And with the children's bed-quilt came over from X-Roads, on the day Mrs. Young John moved into her new home Over the Hill, braided mats and a drawn rug, pincushion, fire-screens, chair-cushions and a whole set of china; and Aunt Nancy said she felt as if she were setting up a Mammy Doty of her own.

And on that day, because she was a married woman, she began to wear a cap — a dainty one with worked lace ruffles and delicate ribbons.

You will like to know that Lyddy's grandfather came down to the wedding and was highly pleased. But instead of a wedding present to the bride he gave his grandchild a handsome riding-horse for her own! He took great comfort in Lyddy, and made frequent visits, but chose to keep his home near the hunting-grounds, and Lyddy and Granny and Mr. and Mrs. Young John always took their Thanksgiving Day dinner up at The Meadows.

You will also like to know that the beautiful Red Cloak in due time was made into a warm and pretty garment for Lyddy; and also that the Unicorn had a place of honor on the dining-room mantelpiece; and that Granny — whom Mr. and Mrs. Young John always addressed as "Sylvie," though she was still "Granny" for

Lyddy — had a comfortable fireside rocking-chair, and that Caper — yes, surely Caper was in Mrs. Young John's new home! Of an evening he was always to be seen snuggled close to his young mistress, and when his bed-time came he trotted off to his wadded box in the kitchen. His roller-cart? Why, that was his box!

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